

An Open Letter to Elected Officials, Agencies, and the Media

September 15, 2011

We the undersigned business people in the Burlington area are deeply concerned by SSA Marine's plans to transform the Cherry Point terminal in northwest Washington into one of the largest coal export facilities in North America, to export 54 million tons of coal from Wyoming/Montana to Asia per year. The plans require up to 18 additional trains daily, each up to 1.6 miles long, hauling uncovered coal cars through downtown Burlington and Skagit County, threatening significantly adverse impacts to our community.

Burlington is a unique growing city with a lovely natural environment and unique rural economy. Burlington and Skagit County are attractive to the million-plus visitors to the region each year because of the Skagit River and convenient access to prime farmlands, the Cascade Mountains, national and state parks and forests, historic places in Skagit County listed in the National Register, and the San Juan Islands in the Puget Sound.

Burlington has a well-maintained downtown adjacent to the rail line with new businesses being added on a regular basis. The unique characteristics of Burlington make it essential that federal and state officials conduct a detailed review of significant economic, cultural, health, safety, aesthetic, and quality of life impacts from adding up to 28.8 miles of coal trains daily through Burlington, including:

- ^ traffic delays at each Burlington "at-grade" rail crossing, preventing access to local businesses and cultural events;
- ^ loss of revenues and jobs for existing businesses cut off from their customers, service routes, and deliveries;
- ^ loss of tourism and customers due to blocked access to and from I-5 and other thoroughfares, including loss of revenue to area businesses and damage to Burlington's quality of life reputation;
- ^ degraded commuter transportation to work sites and schools;
- ^ impaired emergency response to residents and businesses, and blocked emergency access to medical care from downtown Burlington and elsewhere;
- ^ health and quality of life impacts from diesel exhaust, fugitive coal dust, and noise;

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- ^ lowering of commercial and residential property values and resultant loss of tax revenues;
- ^ loss of new businesses and new commercial and residential development and associated construction jobs; and
- ^ loss of substantial federal and state investments in passenger rail service.

We understand that review of the Cherry Point Gateway terminal proposal will likely include preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) by state and federal agencies. We urge that the EIS process include a rigorous and detailed analysis that accurately evaluates all direct, indirect, and cumulative adverse impacts to Burlington and Skagit County businesses. While the applicant's public relations campaign promises to add hundreds of jobs at the terminal, it is silent about the net loss of jobs along the train route, so the potential loss of jobs and revenues in Burlington and Skagit County deserves the utmost consideration.

The EIS review process should also include rigorous alternative site analyses of all available deep port sites in Washington, with an evaluation of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, including other proposals associated with rail lines. The alternatives analysis should compare the adverse effects of each site based upon detailed study of the kind of impacts we have identified in this letter.

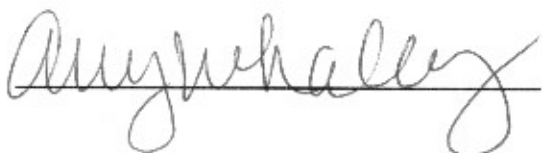
We recognize that Burlington is by no means the only city along the route to this proposed coal terminal that treasures its quality of life, so we earnestly request a full and complete scope of state and federal review that includes economic, health, and environmental factors, along the entire rail corridor from Spokane to Cherry Point. Only then can the true societal costs of the proposed Cherry Point Gateway terminal be assessed.

Signature

 (Brad Whaley)

Name or description of business, address

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Signature (and print name)

Name or description of business, address

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BURLINGTON - INSURANCE AGENCY

Michael Jones Michael Jones

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CORY EKREM CORY EKREM

EKREM HARDWARE Do-it center
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Martin McNett Martin McNett

MARTY'S PAINTS
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Signature (and print name)

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